

January 29, 2009

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COVERING LETTER

SUBMISSION

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
FAX: 02 6277 5809

Copy: Senator Gary Humphries: FAX: 02 6257 4140

Copy: Senate Community Affairs Committee FAX: 02 6277 5829

Dear Secretary,

I offer a late submission for the **Inquiry into Residential and Community Aged Care in Australia** which the Committee may choose to take into consideration.

With consideration of the terms of reference, I ask the Committee to consider current Government policy of reducing the age pension of elderly individuals in care facilities after two to five years in care if they still own a family home and to consider that the aged live longer today than ten or twenty years ago, and that the impact of punishing the family still in the family home - often on low income and former carers - and upon the aged pensioner in care by throwing back to them the burden of payment for the facility each month, causes mental stress and anxiety and financial stress unnecessarily.

With consideration of the terms of reference, I ask the Committee to consider that it is socially and economically unconscionable of a Government to cancel the age pension of a senior when his or her assets change without any speculation but because the market value of his or her home has moved. I ask the Committee to consider and agree that assets limits should move in keeping with the move of the market place and that limits should raise by a third.

As you would be aware, in the 2000s, property values skyrocketed. In Boroondara, my municipality, my mother's home value on the rates notice went from \$600,000 to \$890,000 in a year, yet what bread or money would that put on her plate? Nothing. Her home is a small, unrenovated, 1960s cream brick veneer.

I note that in a considered letter by Senator Humphries sent to me in September, 2008, he said, "As you have indicated, it is true that the income and assets limits for obtaining a full age pension have not been increased for a number of years." Then obviously there is need for change now.

I note that when Centrelink reduces an aged pension or even cancels it, this impacts on the quality of care and life of the aged senior living in a facility in many ways: it can reduce the quality of clothing and footwear bought for them by family, it can reduce or stop family members undertaking regular and even daily dry cleaning for the party in care because there is no longer the money, it can reduce treats provided or drives and meals, it can reduce eyewear and hearing aid purchases and updates it can cancel private health cover or leave it to lapse, it can reduce hairdressing, it can reduce books or magazines or newspapers provided for the loved one, all because there is no longer the money.

The elderly and their families should not be punished because a senior can no longer be cared for by the family and needs to go into an aged care facility.

Thank you,
Yours sincerely,

